

GAIN-Q

Global Appraisal of Individual Needs–Quick: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Version 2.5

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Questions and Answers on the GAIN-Q

Below are the FAQs for the GAIN-Q and the GAIN-QM. The first pages consist of general questions, followed by questions related to individual GAIN-Q items. Answers can be found by looking up specific items, which appear in the same order as on the GAIN-Q, or by doing a text search (ctrl + F) of the pdf version of this document.

- If the first keyword you try on a text search doesn't work, try using synonyms. For instance, if you want to look up information on hallucinogens, you can do a text search for "hallucinogen," "mushroom," "acid," or other related terms.
- Searching for the short fragments of a keyword will also help find words that might otherwise be missed. For example, searching for "hallucinogen" would bring up only that word, but searching for the fragment "hallucin" could bring up "hallucinogen," "hallucinogens," "hallucinogenic," "hallucinate," "hallucination," "hallucinogen," "hallucinatory," "hallucinosis," and related forms of those words.
- If you can't remember a GAIN-Q item number, you can search by words in the item text or words related to that item.
- Some items may not have their own FAQ but may be answered as part of other items. If you can't find an FAQ related to a certain item number, do a text search for that item in case it's addressed elsewhere.

The most current version of the GAIN-Q FAQs, which is updated periodically, is located at http://www.chestnut.org/LI/gain/GAIN_Q/index.html#MatAv.

General Questions

Clarifying response format

- Q: For items that ask for the participant to respond with a number of days out of the past 90, what should I do if the participant answers, "Every day"?
- A: Check what "every day" means for the participant. For instance, does the adolescent mean every day for the past 3 months? Every day during the week but not on weekends? And so on. For example, "So 'every day' as in every day of every week for the full 90 days?" If this is correct, record "90." If not, clarify further and code.

Fractions

- Q: Can fractions, like "half a beer" or "a quarter hour," be recorded on the GAIN?
- A: No. Only whole numbers should be documented on the hard copy, and ABS will accept only whole numbers for data entry. If the participant responds with something other than a whole number, the response should be clarified by telling the participant that the answer can be recorded only in whole numbers. The response can then be rounded up to the next whole number. For example, for GF3a, "During the past 90 days, on how many days did you go to any kind of school or training program," if the participant responds "Ten and a half days," the correct way to code the response would be to clarify the answer with the participant, and then, if necessary, explain that you're going to enter "11" (rounded up to the next whole number).

GAIN-Q Excel Spreadsheet

Q: To enter data in the GAIN-Q Excel spreadsheet, I always get a message asking whether I want to enable or disable macros or to just cancel. What button should I press?

A: In this case, always choose the Enable Macros button.

Q: In the GAIN-Q Excel spreadsheet there is a link that says, “Click here to clear and save data.” When I clicked it, it did not move the entered data over into the database. Did this happen because I didn’t enable the macros?

A: Yes, the button did not work because the macros were not enabled. If you do not enable the macros, you won’t be able to run the scoring program.

Long lists of symptoms

Q: Do you have to read the entire list of symptoms before the participant can answer? For example, for EH1c (During the past 12 months, have you had significant problems with feeling very trapped, lonely, sad, blue, depressed, or hopeless about the future?) do you have to read all the symptoms before the participant can answer?

A: If the participant says “Yes” before you finish reading the item, go ahead and circle 1, since the participant has already endorsed the item. However, if the participant interrupts you and says “No” before you finish reading the list of symptoms, diplomatically tell the participant that you need to read the list of symptoms to the end of the sentence.

Participation in AA/NA

Q: Where should attendance at Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous be recorded?

A: We do not currently collect this information (nor does GPRA). It is not a form of treatment, but support. If the participant happens to mention it, if you want to, you could record it in one of the optional notes fields.

Repeating the stem

Q: Do you have to keep repeating the stem for a list of grouped items? For example, “During the past 12 months...” appears before many questions—do we have to repeat it every time?

A: No, only if there has been an interruption (e.g., someone comes in the room, a side conversation) or for clarification. We suggest repeating the stem every few subitems just to remind the participant of the appropriate time frame or other information in the stem.

Shelf life of data

Q: How long after you administer a GAIN-Q assessment is the data still valid to import into the GAIN-I?

A: The data should be imported within a week—up to ten days as an upper bound—after the assessment was administered. After that, it will need to be readministered.

Verbatim fields and Notes fields

Q: For verbatim lines or to add comments in ABS, how much space is there in both fields

- to record any additional information?
- A: For verbatim fields, there is space for 40 characters. Any text longer than that has to be entered into the Notes field. Click on Notes and continue writing the comments—there is no limit to the amount of text that you can enter in this field, and it can be printed out in a separate document.
- Q: In many cases when administering an assessment via paper and pencil, I jot down a lot of side information and notes. How can I make sure that all of this information gets entered?
- A: When writing notes, please make sure it is very clear which item the note refers. Circle the notes if you want them to be keyed into ABS.

Questions on Specific Items

Item BK4

- Q: Do we need to ask gender if it's obvious?
- A: No.

Item BK5

- Q: In item BK5, the list of races and ethnicities all require a yes or no response. Do we have to ask each race and ethnicity?
- A: It is certainly fine to ask every race and ethnicity. However, another option would be to ask the question and then circle "Yes" for each race or ethnicity mentioned. If you go this route, make sure you ask, "Are there any others?" until the participant says "No."

Item BK6b

- Q: Regarding item BK6b ("Who has custody of you?"), should we document who the adolescent lives with or who makes the adolescent's decisions? They may be different for the same adolescent.
- A: Note that there is a difference between legal custody and legal guardianship. The person whom the adolescent lives with has legal custody, while legal guardianship is who makes the adolescent's decisions. Sometimes they can be different for the same adolescent. Although the item is not written this way, the response to the item should document legal guardianship, or who makes the adolescent's decisions.

Item BK6b

- Q: For the item about custody, do we record the name of the person or the relationship?
- A: Record the relationship, not the name.

Item BK6b

- Q: Most (95%) of the group home tract kids whom we screen are wards of the juvenile court or their custodial arrangement is under judicial review or pending. The court often tells their families that whether or not they will retain custody is dependent on how the adolescent does if they go through a treatment program. However, most of these adolescents identify their parent as having custody. They almost never identify the

court, county, or state. This is because the kids themselves are not really clear on the differences between guardianship and custody, and even with interviewer attempts to probe and clarify they really don't know who has custody. So in these instances, the adolescent's self-report contradicts what we find in our review of the adolescent's chart. What should we do with contradictory information like this?

- A: For this item, assuming the information in the chart is more reliable than the adolescent's self-report, update the information recorded on the GAIN-Q to what you have learned from the chart. Make a note in the Notes field for that item in the data entry program that documents the source of the information.

Item BK6b

- Q: Suppose an adolescent participant answers that her biological parent and stepparent have custody of her. Do we write in both?
- A: Technically, this item taps guardianship—who makes decisions for the participant. Clarify with the participant to make sure she understands that this item gets at decision-making rights rather than whom she currently lives with. If she answers that both her biological parent and stepparent have the legal right to make her decisions, write in both relationships. If the participant is not sure, enter “DK” and make a staff note.

Item BK7

- Q: This item reads, “What is the highest grade of education you have completed?” So does this mean, for instance, that if an adolescent is currently in the 7th grade, then we would record 6th grade since that was the last one he completed?
- A: Yes, that is correct.

Item BK7

- Q: How do you code years of college completed?
- A: For completed years of higher education, code as follows:
- 13:** 1 year completed (freshman year at college or university; 1 year at community college)
 - 14:** 2 years completed (sophomore year at college or university; 2 years at community college or Associates degree)
 - 15:** 3 years completed (junior year at college or university; 2 years at community college and 1 year at college or university)
 - 16:** 4 years completed (senior year at college or university; 2 years at community college and 2 years at college or university)
- And so on.

Item BK7

- Q: This item reads, “What is the highest grade of education you have completed?” What if the adolescent is homeschooled? Does homeschooling count?
- A: Yes. Homeschooled students complete curriculum associated with specific grade levels. Record completed homeschooling grades as you would any other schooling. If the adolescent doesn't know, put “DK.”

Item BK7a

- Q: Suppose that for item BK7a (Do you have a high school degree or GED?) we learn that the participant has earned a GED. Should we go back to item BK7 and fill in grade 12?
- A: No. Item BK7 is the actual grade the participant has completed. A participant can report completing, say, 3rd grade or 8th grade in BK7, but in BK7a he could report having a GED.

Item BK8a

- Q: Suppose the adolescent has indeed previously completed the GAIN-Q but can't remember when. What should we record for this item?
- A: There are a number of strategies to follow. First, check to see whether the date is on file. If you cannot find it or are unsure of it, then help the adolescent try to remember the date by offering memory prompts—for instance, what was going on at or around that time, what season was it, why was she taking the GAIN-Q, etc. If this doesn't help and the adolescent really doesn't know, there are a number of guidelines to follow for estimating dates. To estimate the month, use the "March-July-October" rule: if the last GAIN-Q was completed early in the year, use March; if the middle of the year, use July; and if the end of the year, use October. To estimate a day, use the "5-15-25" rule: use 5 if the interview took place at the beginning of the month, 15 if during the middle, and 25 if during the end of a month. To estimate a year, make the best approximation based on the adolescent's age or other information.

Item GF1d

- Q: This item states, "In your lifetime, have you been stopped by the police or arrested 5 or more times?" Does that mean that the participant has been stopped by the police at least 1 time or arrested at least 5 times?
- A: No—whether the participant has been stopped 5 or more times or arrested 5 or more times.

Items GF2e-h

- Q: I interviewed a 13-year-old today who has never held a paid job. When it came to items GF2e-h on work, I wasn't sure how to code them. Should they be skipped or coded "NA" in the column or what?
- A: Code them "No." If there is concern that the total score on the General Factors Index will be artificially deflated because these items do not apply to a given adolescent, add a margin or staff note or make a comment in the Additional Comments section. Do not skip the item or write "NA" off to the side. If it does not apply, circle "No."

Item GF3j

- Q: Item GF3j asks how many days (in the past 90) a youth lived in a place where he was not free to come and go as he pleased, like a jail, an inpatient program, or a hospital. If the youth was on electronic monitoring or house arrest during the past 90 days, does this time get counted in GF3j?
- A: No. This item asks for the number of days in which a youth was in a controlled environment in order to get an idea about how much of the time he couldn't (or wasn't

supposed to) use even if he had wanted to. If a youth is on electronic monitoring or house arrest, he is still free to use. Although technically the item sounds like it could include days on house arrest or on electronic monitoring, the item response should not include those days.

Item SS1c

- Q: In this item, the only relationship changes noted that cause stress are marriage, divorce, and separation. Are we supposed to include only these relationships? They typically don't apply to our kids.
- A: The relationships noted are just examples. Some other examples that would be pertinent to adolescents are breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend, brothers and sisters being separated due to placement in different foster homes, fighting with best friend, etc.

Item SS2f-g

- Q: It would seem that sources of stress to parents (e.g., loss of job) would be relevant here. Should we include the parent's job loss, or should the answer be with respect to the adolescent alone?
- A: This set of questions is meant to include information about the participant's personal sources of stress, such as resulting from losing their job (if applicable). Participants should respond "No" to items that do not apply to them. However, in the case you describe, if participants feel that their parents' job loss has directly caused the participant to feel stress, then it would be acceptable to include that information for these items and answer "Yes." However, the interviewer should make a staff note to indicate that the parents lost employment, not the participant.

Item PH1

- Q: During a recent GAIN-Q administration, I asked item PH1 (During the past 12 months, would you say your health in general was...?) and the participant answered, "Excellent." Now I know from other sources that this participant has Crohn's disease. Should I have raised this and asked her to reconsider her answer?
- A: No. This item is qualitative in nature and typically measures how a person feels relative to how she has felt in the past. Thus someone with a history of Crohn's disease or any other disease or condition might rate herself as feeling "excellent" during the past 12 months if her condition has not been bothering her, even though objectively she is not completely healthy.

Item PH3a

- Q: When an administrator interviewed 7th and 8th grade students, the majority responded, "Yes" to this item (During the past 12 months, have you lost or gained 10 or more pounds when you were not trying to?). When he tried to clarify, it turns out they answered this way because have gone through growth spurts and changes. Does answering "Yes" because of physical maturation make any difference in the results on the GAIN-Q?
- A: Reporting this symptom alone would not put the participant into a problem range; it would only if it coincided with other health problems or complaints. Although growth spurts explain this answer, they may also create other health problems, particularly for

kids on medication where their dosage may need to be adjusted because of the same growth spurt.

Item BH5c.

- Q: When counting the number of days in the past 90 that a participant is involved in any activities that he thought might get him into trouble or be against the law, should the participant include days of drug use?
- A: No. Do not include days restricted to the use of drugs. However, do include days of drug-related activities (selling, etc.).

Item BH5c

- Q: This item asks for the last time the participant did anything that could have gotten him into trouble or been against the law besides using drugs. I know we don't count using drugs, but what about getting caught using drugs? What about selling drugs? What kind of alcohol- or drug-related crime counts for this question?
- A: Do not include getting caught using drugs, but do include selling drugs. Count any alcohol or drug-related activities that go beyond simple possession or use, e.g., dealing or driving under the influence.

Item SR1

- Q: I recently interviewed an adolescent, and when we got to SR1 (During the past 12 months, have you used any alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, heroin, or other substances?) he answered "No," but I knew that he had used because his P.O. told me he recently got in trouble for it. If the participant answers no to the question, the rest of the items in this section are skipped. How should I handle this situation so the rest of the data is collected?
- A: Although an interviewer is supposed to ask all required items on the GAIN-Q, the situation you describe is one in which you may be better off not asking it but proceeding with the interview as if you had. If the interviewer has information from a reliable source that the participant has used within the past year (e.g., the participant recently failed a drug screen such as a urine or hair test, the participant was recently caught using, etc.), the interviewer may circle "Yes" to item 1 without asking it. While doing so, the interviewer should give an explanation for the action. For instance, "I am aware that you were caught using marijuana the other day, so I am going to mark that you have used alcohol or other drugs in the past year, okay?" Usually, this action and its explanation will reduce lying about use. If the participant insists that he didn't and hasn't used in the past year, don't argue about it. Circle "No" and skip to the Service Utilization section. Be sure to make a note of the interaction in the Case Disposition section under Additional Comments and in the notes field for that item (if using ABS).

Item SR4

- Q: The transitional statement that appears before item SR4 (During the last 90 days that you lived in the community, on how many days did you...) mentions behavior during a time period different than the past-90-day and past-12-month time periods anchored before beginning the GAIN-Q. Should we anchor this new time period before administering this item?

- A: Yes, after you read the transitional statement that introduces item SR4, anchor the time period for the last 90 days the adolescent lived in the community. Use the same technique you used when establishing the anchors for the past 12 months and past 90 days at the start of the administration.

Item SR4

- Q: The transitional statement and stem for item SR4 (During the last 90 days that you lived in the community...) specifically targets behavior while the adolescent was “living in the community” rather than behavior over a time period regardless of where the adolescent was living. Why do we ask for this information?
- A: The purpose of the item is to get estimates of typical use when the adolescent is free to use, that is, without the restrictions that living in a controlled environment could entail.

Item SR4f

- Q: Item SR4f asks, “During the last 90 days that you lived in the community, on how many days did you go without using any alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs?” Do you mean the total number of days out of 90, or the most days in a row?
- A: Record the total number of days out of 90. It doesn’t matter if periods of abstinence are sprinkled among periods of use.

Item EN4

- Q: This item refers to the place that best describes where the form was completed. Where can I document juvenile detention?
- A: Code it under “prison, jail, or detention.”

Item CD1 – Referral Source(s)

- Q: We have a client who was self-referred to a counselor. The counselor then referred him to our program at the substance abuse center. For item CD1, would his referral source and corresponding code be “Self” or “Behavioral health provider”?
- A: Technically, a counselor referred him. However, bottom line he was referred by himself apparently because he has substance-related problems. Referral source should be “Self.” If you wanted to, you could record both “Self” and “Counselor” and add a note in the Additional Comments section (item 4) at the bottom of the page. If you are using ABS, you could record an explanation in the notes fields for those items or a note in the Additional Comments section.

Item CD-s

- Q: One of the categories is “noncompliance.” What should be included in this item?
- A: Violating probation, parole, suspension, or other requirements.